

A Manifesto for a New Walking Culture: 'dealing with the city' Wrights & Sites

with contributions from Richard Layzell, Bess Lovejoy, Fiona Templeton and contemporaries of the Dada movement

First presented at the sixth international conference organised by WALK21: *Everyday Walking Culture*, Zürich, Switzerland, September 22-23, 2005. Subsequently presented at ICA, London; Exeter Phoenix; and PSI#12: *Performing Rights*, Queen Mary University London.

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This manifesto was performed at a plenary session of a conference for urban planners, architects, activists and others interested in walking. Consistent with the site-specificity of our work at that time, it was created with the conference's Zürich venue, Kasino, in mind: it makes reference not only to the idea of the casino, but also to Zürich Dada and to Bertolt Brecht's brief period of exile in the city.

The idea of casino provided the structure of the manifesto, which is divided into four suits (as in a deck of playing cards). Each 'suit' was written by a different member of Wrights & Sites. For the 'court cards' (Jack, Queen, King) of each of these four suits, guest artists were invited to create short manifesto provocations. Fiona Templeton and Richard Layzell contributed short video statements, stills from which are presented here, while texts by Bess Lovejoy (with Damon Morris) and contemporaries of the Dada movement were projected.

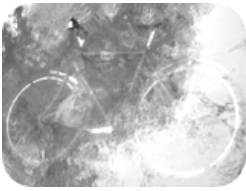
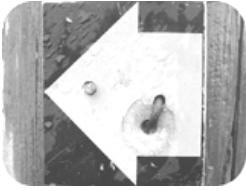
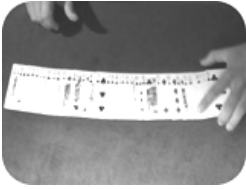
The order of presentation was guided by a shuffle of a deck of cards by a croupier.

We had always liked the idea of writing a manifesto, though previous attempts to do so had spiralled into chaotic, lengthy documents or been forgotten, lost amid a plethora of other projects. The invitation to Zürich seemed an opportunity to realise this ambition, with a nod towards Dada's manifestos (or anti-manifestos). The structuring device of the deck of cards provided us with a formal strategy for layering the multiple perspectives in the manifesto.

The context of the manifesto was the making of site-specific performance and art projects, with a particular emphasis on cities, carried out by Wrights & Sites since its formation in 1997. In 2003, we had produced *An Exeter Mis-Guide*, which encouraged new ways of exploring the city, making it strange and seeking out its 'mythogeography' (the personal, mythical, fictional and fanciful mappings that intertwine or subvert the official, municipal identities and histories of a place). Despite being made for a small city in the South-West of England, we were surprised by the interest in the book by people in other cities, countries and even continents. People were using *An Exeter Mis-Guide*, a book written for a city they would probably never even visit, in order to gather ideas for exploring their own localities. In response to this, and disrupting the specificity of our own practice, we created a new publication, published shortly after this manifesto was written, but very much part of the same collection of work: *A Mis-Guide To Anywhere*, which plays with the absurd ambitions of its title and invites the reader to use it 'anywhere', thereby encouraging comparisons and imaginative links between diverse places. Alongside these publications and others (for example, *A Courtauld Mis-Guide*, created for the East Wing Collection at London's Courtauld Institute) we have worked with the 'drift' or 'dérive', the guided tour and other site-specific performance not only in Exeter but in other cities, islands and open spaces (Manchester, München, Herm, Bilbao, Paris, Naples, Winchester, Little Wittenham, New York, Milton Keynes, Ndola and Welcombe Barton to name a few).

Drawing on our urban exploratory work, this is a manifesto for the *active and creative* pedestrian. It envisions a walking that is neither a functional necessity (to shops, to work) nor a passive appreciation of (or complaint about) the urban environment. Instead this is a manifesto for a walking that engages with and changes the city, it recruits the arts not as passive expressions or appreciations of the city, but as the active changings of it.

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Q ♦

'Our intent is to show walking not only as a directed movement from one place to another, but a wandering, an odyssey of sight and sound, a quest for knowledge and stimulation, a grand roaming expedition, and a living breathing work of art in its own right.' (Lovejoy & Morris 2005)

4 ♣

WALK: Attempt to redress, in a small way, the overabundance of hierarchical road signs established by our public servants.¹ 'They may, for example, tell you that there is only "one way" to navigate a particular area. Find other ways of walking, mapping and signing routes through these public spaces.' (Wrights & Sites 2003: 46)

3 ♠

To combat the functionalism of walking by having no particular place to go. To pick up on other walkers' varied paces from speedy to slow. To invent small or secret dances at bus stops and on railway platforms. To invite people to go for walks with you as a gift to be unwrapped with your feet. To use walking as an opportunity to greet neighbours and to break long-established silences. To write the city with your relationships.

8 ♣

WALK: Abolish weather forecasts,² and consign the umbrella to the dissecting table.³ Don't physically or mentally 'wrap yourself up against all weathers'. Unlike most municipal tour guides and their followers, be prepared to enjoy 'getting wet' along the way.

5 ♥

Guy Debord writes of the Situationist 'dérive' or 'drift', 'Written descriptions can be no more than passports to this great game.' (Debord 1995 [1958]: 53) We described our first Mis-Guide as 'a forged passport to your "other" city.' (Wrights & Sites 2003: back cover)

The passport gets us across a threshold, raises the curtain. The text of a mis-guide designates the city as a real, yet imaginary, space of play.

Brecht wrote that the only passport needed by theatre was fun: the invitation to a game. (Brecht 1964 [1949]: 180)

Our suggestions for walking make things strange, make the city 'other', as if the lighting state has suddenly altered. This is the half light, the 'candlelight' which, in the children's rhyme, gets us to Babylon and back.⁴

A ♦

Is there any point in making walking safe if it only gets us to the hospice more efficiently?



J ♦

'Most daily life in the westernized world involves pod-based living, from the home "pod" to the train or car "pod" to the work "pod", creating a closed-in sensorium that becomes one's sole experience. This is the antithesis of walking culture.' (Lovejoy & Morris 2005)



6 ♠

To go shopping without the intention to buy and to view shopping malls as hyper-real museums to consumerism. To travel the world in a supermarket making atlases from imported food placed in your basket or trolley. To write the city with conscious choices.



9 ♦

Hail the new citizen-octopus! - discovering sensations in the textures and secrets of their city, a city disrupted to meet the needs and desires of an evolving, mutating walking. Until the planners mutate we cannot submit our dreams to their permission, until then our plans will have momentum outside of legislation.



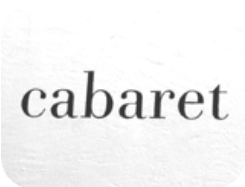
K ♠

'This is a bus. They've only had buses in Tbilisi for three weeks. And I haven't taken one because nobody's quite sure where they go. It's much safer to walk.'⁵



K ♦

'Different languages and moods float by, intermingling with sounds of industry, business, music, laughter, and the crying of children and seagulls. As the walker is drawn in by a friendly face, a startling art exhibit, or a secret path into strange lush grottos, we follow their experiences and are drawn in as well.' (Lovejoy & Morris 2005)



Q ♣

'... to be a Dadaist means to let oneself be thrown by things, to oppose all sedimentation; to sit in a chair for a single moment is to risk one's life ...' (Huelsenbeck 1989 [1920]: 246)



4 ♥

We aspire to games that are open to everyone, to the sky.

In Monte Carlo, I walked around the Grand Casino, fascinated by its doorways, its steps and arches. Security guards quietly hovered in the entrances. 'Members only' were invited up ornate steps. In the entrance hall there were photographs of Salvador Dali, kissing Princess Grace and speeding across the bay in a boat with Walt Disney.

I felt more at home with the herd of decorated cattle wandering the city centre: the *Cow Parade*, last seen in Manchester. Inelegant tourists, dressed in hearts and daisies, they seemed to look curiously at the casino, but remained sceptical.



A ♠

Step on the cracks and find the gaps and make new tracks. Extend your walking territory becoming more aware of the restrictions being imposed upon you by signs and surfaces and the aggressive armoured invasion of the car. Extend your experience by habitually eroding the controls of speed and commerce. Walk a new walking culture to write the city with your bodies.



7 ♠

To give a word to each footstep so that a walk becomes a story or poem. To re-enact particular walks and styles of walking that you have found in books, plays and films and to write the city with your own associations.



J ♠

'Somewhere here, six years ago, I broke my foot. But, when you break your foot, the hole is not the thing you remember. And it was dark. And I said I can walk in the dark, but I wasn't bargaining on the holes in the streets of Tbilisi.'¹⁶



6 ♣

WALK: Abolish habitual walking patterns,⁷ such as the home-to-work-and-back routine: those head-down journeys when the mind is focused elsewhere and 'elsewhen'. Walking artists, Lone Twin, for example, disrupted the byways of Colchester by carrying a telegraph pole in a straight line across the city, right through houses and shops, in their piece *Totem* (1998). 'I think we should get into the river ... and walk from one side to the other,' he said, Gary to Gregg. (Lone Twin 2001: 2)



4 ♠

To insist upon the rights of the pedestrian over the car. To dream of the day when you do not have to say 'Mind the road' to children. To continue laying flowers at the sites of pedestrian road accident fatalities. To regard wheelchair users as walkers not separate from ped-estrians. Take a chair into the Shopping Mall to see this point of view / this viewpoint. Break the taboo and travel by wheelchair for a day. To write the city with Human Rights.



2 ♦

Every walk is a potential planning - we can be planners or we can be artist's impressions.



7 ♥

Babylon is a dangerous place. Walking is the exercise of a freedom that does not exist everywhere or at all times or for all people. It is the exercise of a freedom to re-make the space by the ways in which we live it, perform it, play it.



10 ♥

We demand the right to linger. We are loiterers without intent. We are children taking the long way home from school.



J ♥

'I think walking as part of my practice crept up on me: it was happening before I realised it.'¹⁸



10 ♠

To re-value public space with an eye more akin to the musings and perceptions of children so that we might gain a deeper insight into the 'poetics of space', inviting children's participation in the planning of their environments. To hold meetings, discussions, readings, and vigils on traffic islands or to make decisions on foot and on the streets instead of in airless committee meeting rooms. To write minutes, musings and decisions on paving stones.



K ♣

'Leave everything. Leave Dada. Leave your wife. Leave your mistress. Leave your hopes and fears. Leave your children in the woods. Leave the substance for the shadow. Leave your easy life, leave what you are given for the future. Set off on the roads.' (Breton 1978 [1922]: 166)



5 ♦

We might change the meaning of 'excess' - from 'rubbish tip' to 'moving without a destination' - every seventh sign in our city will be a mystery, a metaphor or an absurdity.



10 ♦

In every city we will set up a Tourist Misinformation Office - to tell the truth about the city... to invite our visitors to re-make the city rather than consume it - we will stop tidying ruins and lighting the night sky, we will encourage public art to be made by the public - this will be funded by a subsidy equivalent to the city's spending on tranquilisers, weapons and automobiles.



K ♥

'Now it's integrated into designing major events for 150 people to walk silently through a major city.'⁹



3 ♦

One architect-walker dreams of a city as delicate as flesh - where bodies are respected as pillars of stone once were. This architect will design the next landscapes as extended human organs.



Q ♥

'Walking was becoming an art-form without really intending it to be.'¹⁰



9 ♠

Amble, ramble and de-ramble the city in search of wildlife, ancient tracks, sacred signs and paths of desire and fill abandoned roadside cars with earth and turn them into immobile gardens. To celebrate the growth of weeds, plants, flowers in the most hostile urban zones. To follow the journeys of insects as your guides. To write the city with cobwebs, tendrils and minute flora and fauna.



Zürich GPS map [detail]
Daniel Belasco Rogers

7 ♣

WALK: Abolish industrially-produced maps.¹¹ Walking can facilitate the construction of new, more personalised maps, as in the case of Daniel Belasco Rogers' *The daily practice of map making*. He's been using a handheld GPS device to record all of his journeys since April 2003.¹² 'If at the end of your life, you could look at the shapes your wanderings over the earth have made, what

patterns would you see? What words may be formed that take a human lifetime to write?' he said in his piece *Unfallen* (2003).



5 ♠

To invite town planners on practical courses exploring trespass and paths of desire. To adopt public places for sitting as if they are an extension of your home and to recognise and respect the people whose furniture is the street. To write the city with your presence.



Q ♠

'This is another dangerous spot to walk because usually there's water coming out of this spout here - because they don't really have gutters. It just pours out onto the street. So, I'm going to walk under it for safety - behind it.'¹³



8 ♥

Communists of international distinction have no business in our country any longer. Just because it is more comfortable to live in ... bourgeois Switzerland is no reason to let such foreigners take root here.

(Zürich foreign police, cited in Honegger 2005: 109)

And so the Zürich police refused a residence permit to Bertolt Brecht: his games were shifted elsewhere, his letters left in a forgotten suitcase, like so many others all over Europe. In spite of paranoid reactions to international terrorism, we propose to keep on welcoming strangers.



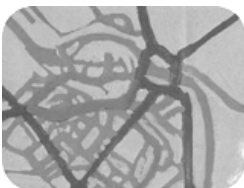
10 ♣

WALK: Believe absolutely that every walker is a potential mis-guide, every walk leads to anywhere.¹⁴



6 ♦

Another architect-walker will design a city of ideas where beliefs and differences of opinion blow the flags on an invisible town hall - yet another lets nature in, leaves spaces for miniature wildernesses, designs a monument to the glacier, wave or asteroid that will one day destroy us.



9 ♣

WALK: Abolish ETAs, predetermined destinations and thoughts of artistic outcomes.¹⁵ Forget the future as you walk. Leave your watch at home. Drift for three or four months at a time as the psychogeographer, Ivan Chtcheglov, claimed to do. Like the artist, Richard Long, let the walk become the work. 'To walk a line is the easiest thing a human being can do to put his [or her] mark on a place,' he said. (Long 1991: 27)



8 ♦

Playfulness, disruption, gifts left for strangers, the sharing of visions, intelligent flash-mobbing, provocations at the tipping points of cities, making a scene so that the city performs itself, mis-guided tours, wireless on-line technology - combining phone, movie, digital design, camera, editing desk and ipod - sending routes, signs and stories in waves across spreading networks of uncontrollable walking, maps of atmospheres and basins of attraction, and festivals celebrating the reflections in windows and the glints in pedestrians' eyes - these are the instruments of the architect-walker - extraordinary changes will begin with disruptions in the ordinary.



A ♥

Between one thing and another there hangs a curtain: let us draw it up!

(Brecht 1964 [1949]: 189)



J ♣

'If you are ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends, and never see them again - if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man - then you are ready to go for a walk.' (Thoreau 1994 [1862]: 4)



6 ♥

A 9 year old is quoted as saying: 'The most favourite game played in school is "Schools".' (Opie and Opie 1984: 333) As we walk the city, we like to play a game of 'cities'.



4 ♦

The pavements are our színház, our stadttheater, our Institute of Contemporary Arts.



9 ♥

Wir wollen in den Garten gehn,
Wenn nur der böse Geist nicht war!

(German children's rhyme, cited in Opie and Opie 1984: 109)



A ♣

WALK: Protest with your feet.¹⁶



2 ♣

WALK: Acquaint yourself with methods of urban exploration rejected by the good manners of the heritage and tourism industries.¹⁷ 'What happens if you overlay a map of Moscow onto your own city? What do you find where the Kremlin should be? Look for coincidences or references to Russia. Stop in bars and drink vodka. What about Baghdad? ...' (Wrights & Sites 2005)



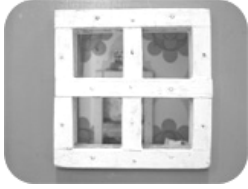
3 ♥

On 9th November, 1947, the exiled Bertolt Brecht was in Zürich and drafted, with others, a manifesto for peace. While here, he also wrote his 'A Short Organum for the Theatre' (Brecht 1964 [1949]) in which he wished for a theatre that could help to change the world. We share Brecht's impulse to make the familiar strange, to engage in the movement of the world, to be flexible, to be open. However, in our work together, we have drawn different conclusions, finding it necessary to abandon the theatre space, however makeshift and temporary, and to walk with people, rather than perform in front of them. The acquisition of a theatre (as Brecht knew, or was to find out) is enmeshed in the conquest of territory. We wanted none of it.



3 ♣

WALK: Abolish the Desk, home to scratching nibs and physical and mental stasis.¹⁸ Erik Satie, for example, the only musician permitted access to the Dada 'club', used to compose during his daily walks to and from the centre of Paris, pausing under lamp-posts at night to write down his thoughts. Listen to his music and you will hear his footsteps. 'Before I compose a piece, I walk round it several times, accompanied by myself,' he said. (Satie 1980 [1913]: 79)



2 ♥

On Iona and Peter Opie's map, (Opie and Opie 1984: 67) our city, Exeter, is replaced with the word 'Hit', while Dartmoor becomes 'Catchers'. North Devon is marked 'TIG'; Plymouth and Helston are both 'It' and Penzance becomes 'Hits'. This map of children's words for chasing games transforms the territory into the space of play we know it to be. We sneak into the grown-up spaces and steal our fun from under municipal noses:

König, ich bin in deinem Land
Ich stehl dir Gold und Silbersand.

(German chasing rhyme, cited in Opie and Opie 1984: 86)



8 ♠

To reclaim the nights in the city. Walking through the streets at the dead of night is not a criminal offence. Insomniacs should not be made to feel guilty for being up and about. Walk where streets have become ghost corridors for somnambulists.



7 ♦

Anyone, anywhere can be an architect-walker - begin by mapping atmospheres and feelings - they are our foundations as we build from ideas and emotions outwards...



2 ♠

To walk with a sense of not knowing anything about the city.

To walk as a constant experiment to discover the intricacies and individuality of your walk that is as distinctive as your handwriting.

Now the city would move like a map you were drawing; now you would begin to live your life like a book you were writing. Called forth by a street or a building, an ensemble of gestures might imply that a different street had to be found, that a building could be redesigned by the gestures performed within it, that new gestures had to be made, even that an unknown city had to be built or an old one overthrown...

(Marcus 1990: 166)



5 ♣

WALK: Know that every object, all objects, feelings and obscurities, every apparition and the precise shock of parallel lines, are potential material for an artwork.¹⁹ As you walk, gather found material, record the stories of the people that you encounter, encourage personal associations, generate mythogeographies, look for the extra-ordinary in the seemingly ordinary...

Notes

1. See Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto 1918*, originally read in the Salle Meise, Zürich, 23 March 1918 (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; every hierarchy and social equation established for values by our valets'.
2. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; the abolition of prophets'.
3. A reference to Lautréamont's oft-quoted, pre-Surrealist statement from *Maldoror* (1868-1869): 'As beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella.'
4. The rhyme goes as follows:
'How many miles to Babylon?
Three score and ten.
Can I get there by candlelight?
Yes, and back again.'
5. This text by Fiona Templeton was accompanied by a video extract of a research walk around Tbilisi (2005).
6. This text by Fiona Templeton was accompanied by a video extract of a research walk around Tbilisi (2005).
7. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; the abolition of memory'.
8. This text by Richard Layzell was accompanied by a video extract of *Walking in Circles* (research in Wargrave, UK, 1999).
9. This text by Richard Layzell was accompanied by a video extract of *Sense Walk* (Project IS, Bristol, UK, 2005).
10. This text by Richard Layzell was accompanied by a video extract of *Talking to Tania 1* (Skyros, Greece, 2004).
11. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; the abolition of archaeology'.
12. See <http://www.planbperformance.net/dan/mapping.htm> for further information.
13. This text by Fiona Templeton was accompanied by a video extract of a research walk around Tbilisi (2005).
14. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; the absolute and indiscutable belief in every god that is an immediate product of spontaneity'.
15. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; the abolition of the future'.
16. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; protest with the fists of one's whole being in destructive action'.
17. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; acquaintance with all the means hitherto rejected by the sexual prudishness of easy compromise and good manners'.
18. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; abolition of logic, dance of those who are incapable of creation'.
19. See Tzara (1992 [1918]: 13): 'DADA; every object, all objects, feelings and obscurities, every apparition and the precise shock of parallel lines, are means for the battle of'.

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